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CHASTISEMENTS NEGLECTED, FORERUNNERS OF
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A SERMON,
PREACHED AT MARGARET CHAPEL,
ON THE VIGIL OF THE ANNUNCIATION,
BEING THE DAY OF HUMILIATION
FOR THE IRISH FAMINE,
1847.

BY THE
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REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW, CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH,
OXFORD.

FOURTH EDITION.

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A SERMON,

&c.

JOEL ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.

WELL has this Epistle been chosen for this day, brethren; for surely it seems like an Epistle written to us by Almighty God Himself, traced not with pen and ink or on tables of stone, but written in our hearts by His own Finger, and the lines are of suffering and death. The Prophet Joel is an awful yet tender preacher; prophesying of judgements to come, and teaching how, by the mercy of God, each judgement may be turned aside, from those judgements which he had then to announce, as just ready to burst upon that former people of God, until the Judgement of the Great Day. He speaks of no special sin, for which the sufferings were sent, and so he warns against all sin: he speaks of the power which repentance has with God, without any limit, and so he proclaims a Gos-

pel message of universal forgiveness and release. This message he delivered to a nation, whose present sufferings and future fears were like our own. Judgements yet heavier were gathering, and these were to burst, the one after the other, unless His people should take warning by the first, and repent with that true contrition of heart, which has power with God. A heavy judgement of God was upon the land; there were fears of worse; and that worse the Prophet had to denounce, unless men repented. A grievous famine was already come; there was a wide desolation; nature itself mourned to its God. The irrational creation also bare the sin^a of man, and groaned, as it were, to God, Who compassionates all suffering, to Whom all suffering is a mute cry, Who hears the ravens' cry, and of Whom, Scripture says, "the lions ask their meat." The Prophet calls his people not to be duller than the poor beasts, but to join, as one man, in one earnest cry to the mercy of God. He calls all, the very young and the very old, priests and people. Where thanksgiving was made at other times, with gladness of heart, "between the porch and the altar," now there must be sorrow; the priests were there to weep and intercede for the people. Those who had yet pure joy were to lay it aside; "let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride from her bridal closet:" even the children at the breasts were to be joined in the common sorrow; both to stir more deeply their parents' sorrow, and by their innocent distress to plead with God. For surely no sorrow so calls forth the tender mercy of

^a שְׂמֵחַ, Joel i. 18.

God, as that of little ones whom His Gracious Hands have just made, and who have not marred His work in themselves. In Nineveh, among those whom, He tells the prophet, He could not but pity, were the "six-score thousand persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left.^b" None then were to spare themselves in the common sorrow: the very old, whose strength seemed gone, or the very young who as yet had it not; those who suffered for their misery, and those who suffered not, were by fellow-suffering, to form one common band who by united sorrow should prevail with God.

Else what was far worse, was coming. "The Day of the Lord was nigh at hand, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness," darkness "which could be felt," coming suddenly, universally, and, if it came, hopelessly; reaching every corner of the land, "like the morning spread upon the mountains," pervading all, penetrating all, enveloping all, like the light; only, instead of light it would be darkness. And if the light were turned into darkness, how great that darkness! If the morning which mitigates most suffering, itself brought sorrow, what other dawn was there? "The Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" The evil to come is told in words which comprise much in one. Every judgement looks on to the end. Each, unless men repent, is a harbinger of another. When Israel grievously sinned under Ahab, God said by Elijah; "Him that escapeth the sword of Jehu

^b Jonah iv. 11.

shall Elisha slay." More searching was the scourge which God raised up within them, than the heathen scourge without; more awful the Prophet, by whom God says, "I hewed them; I have slain them by the words of My mouth^c," than the avenger by whom God destroyed all the worshippers of Baal. For the Prophet spake of the second death. So had the plagues of Egypt deepened in sorrow, until the Egyptians said, "We be all dead men." So had God, in the law, when foreshowing and forewarning His people of the blessing and the curse, upon obedience or rebellion, how, if they would walk in His statutes, He would walk among them and be their God and they His people, added again and again^d the heavy sentence of an increasing doom, if they would not turn at His first chastisement. "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins;" "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." And now again, as in a sort of sacred proverb, Joel declares how, on unrepented sins, God inflicted woe after woe, until the sinner turned to God or perished. Four armies of locusts, each of the later destroying what the former left, are the image of God's successive judgements, each rising in severity above the former, each leaving the sinner or the sinful nation, more exhausted than before^e. He so attempts his description, as to include in it all the scourges of God, the irrational destroyer, and that far fiercer waster,

^c Hos. vi. 5.

^d Lev. xxvi. 18, 21, 24, 28.

^e Joel i. 4.

man^f. Yet both successively do not exhaust the full meaning of the Prophet; for St. John says that their king is the angel of the bottomless pit, Apollyon, the destroyer^g. The Prophet declares, how blow would follow upon blow, destruction upon destruction; the Apostle explains that, among these scourges, permitted and overruled by God, there should be, in the Christian Church, not those only who kill the body, but destroyers of the soul. He himself declares the same principle of God's judgements. In that last book of prophecy which foretells the woes wherewith the Church shall be purified and the world shall be punished, until the end, when four angels had sounded, yet another "cried with a loud voice through the midst of the heavens, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound^h." So when our Lord had foretold "wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, in divers places," He adds, "All these are the beginning of sorrowsⁱ;" the beginning of those birthpangs^k which shall issue in the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

So, then, there is one law in the New Testament and the Old, in God's kingdom of nature and of grace, with Churches, and nations, and individuals,—that Judgements come on slowly, in the long-suffering of God, yet successively; and these, if man repent not, more and more deeply, until they end in the destruction of the sin or of

^f So S. Cyril. Al., Theodoret, S. Jerome.

^g Rev. ix. 11.

^h Rev. viii. 13.

ⁱ S. Matt. xxi. 8.

^k ὠδίνων.

the sinner. "He shall find an end of escaping, when he hath not found an end of sinning¹. And there is this difference between the prophecies of the New Testament and the Old: those of the Old are addressed to the persons under trial, and appeal to them: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel^m?" "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live yeⁿ." In the New Testament, prophecy surveys before-hand the sins of man, contains no call to repentance, but is the denunciation of the wrath of God, as it shall be successively, hopelessly, finally, poured out upon the impenitent.

And so, although living under grace, we turn back for comfort to the Old Testament, the history of God's Providence, there to read God's dealings with us when under His chastisements. It is the light of all other history, Christian or profane. It lifts the veil; and in it we see events, not following one another only, but marshalled by the Hand of God; not locusts only or hail devouring and destroying the fruit of the ground; or the sword, or famine, or the pestilence; but God bringing the locusts with His wind, casting forth the ice like morsels, or saying to the sword, "Sword, go through the land." We have before our eyes, not tens of thousands only perishing by the pestilence, when

¹ Tert. de Pœnit. c. vii. p. 362, Oxf. Tr.

^m Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

ⁿ Ezek. xviii. 32.

David's heart was lifted up and he numbered the people, or the hundred and fourscore and five thousand of Sennacherib's army found dead in one night, just as he was "shaking his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion °;" but the angel of the Lord standing with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, or going forth to smite the camp of the Assyrian. Again, we not only see that visitations, which men now speak of as events in nature, take place through the immediate and special appointment of God, but God on occasion of them, teaches us what power He gives to prayer over Himself. We see God, at the word of His Prophet, shutting the heavens, that it should not rain during the space of three years and six months; and again He tells us how, at the Prophet's prayer, "the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit^p;" and how, at Moses' prayer, "the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain was not poured upon the ground," and "the Lord sent a strong west wind which took away the locusts; there remained not one locust in all the land of Egypt;" and when David offered sacrifice, on Mount Moriah, the image of that Spotless Sacrifice, as at this time^q offered there, and in union with It, "The Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."^r He tells how Hezekiah's prayer obtained deliverance from Sennacherib, when pressing against the gates of Jerusalem. And now the Prophet points to the armies^s of the wrath of God,

° Is. x. 32. p 1 Kings xvii. 1; xviii. 42. S. James v. 17, 18.

^q The day of public humiliation fell in the week before Holy week. ^r 2 Sam., end. ^s Joel ii. 2—11.

marshalled, swift, wide-spread, resistless, invulnerable, speeding on in one unbroken, unentangled course, to execute His sentence; nothing can escape, nothing turns aside, nothing is fenced against them; they come (as an image of the Day of Judgement) suddenly, by surprise, "like a thief^t;" heaven and earth quake before its terrors; all faces gather blackness. Yet even thus, in this last moment, the people are called to penitence; and then he promises that all evil should at once be swept away, all that was lost should be restored^u.

And so, in Christian times, have heathen armies^v, on prayer, been defeated by lightning and hail, sent from heaven against them, or they have been driven back from the walls of a helpless city^w; earthquakes have been stopped at the cry of a whole people, "Lord have mercy^x;" pestilence has been arrested^y; locusts have been swept back from the country which God had sent them to waste^z; and when this very city was desolated by the plague, its ravages abated from the day of united earnest prayer. And what other was it than the Hand

^t Is. ii. 9., comp. S. Matt. xxii. 23. 1 Thess. v. 2, 4. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

^u Ver. 18—27.

^v At the prayers of the Christian soldiers in the army of Marcus Antoninus. See also Tillemont, Hist. d. Emp. t. v. art. 80, p. 165, on the miraculous victory of Theodosius over Eugenius.

^w As Attila from Orleans. Other deliverances are mentioned by Tillemont, Hist. des. Emp. vi. p. 67.

^x Constantinople under Theodosius.

^y As in the time of Gregory the Great. Vit. Joh. Diac. i. 43. Greg. Turon. x. 1.

^z See S. Jerome on Joel ii. 20. Alvarez do Preste Joan das Indias. c. 33.

of "the Most High ruling in the kingdoms of men," when in our own days half a million of soldiery, gathered by the scourge of Europe, rolled like a tide to destroy, and to establish an anti-Christian rule, and scarce a fragment returned? More were those slain by famine, and sudden, almost unheard of cold, than those who were slain by the sword. Fire, frost, and cold fought against the enemy of God ^a.

God fought for us then, Brethren! He exempted us from the scourge which wasted all Europe besides. He spoke to us in great mercy. Even when He would teach us to repent, He taught us rather by the sufferings of others than our own. We used to speak thankfully, how our land was spared the horrors of war. We suffered indeed by it, because we had at home the sorrows of the widow and the fatherless; but its most dreadful horrors reached us not. For nearly eight hundred years, no war has reached this land but what our own passions kindled among ourselves. In a neighbouring land a form of Anti-Christ arose, and God taught us in the carnage there, what our own ways would lead to. He said to us in them, "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." He speaks to us the same words now; but the visitation of His displeasure is not near us only; it is upon us. By His grace, though slowly and partially, we may hope that we have, in the last fifty years, been turning to Him. And thence we may hope, too, that this heavy judgement is an austere mercy. Every judgement

^a The fires of Moscow, and the cold, 27 or 28 degrees below zero.

of God, until men, by final impenitence, exhaust it to themselves and prove themselves unworthy of it and incapable of amendment, is mercy. As individuals, we feel that it is so. Woe is us, that we need so deep a wound; yet the deeper our sores, the more loving and merciful our Physician, Who passed us not by, loathsome as we were in His Holy Eyes, nor ceased to wound us until He reached the very depth of the sore which consumed our life. And what we know by experience as individuals, we believe as a Church and nation, that His Wounds are but to heal; unless through our own wilfulness we put away His healing Hand, and make them incurable.

Yet awful is the Touch of God, even in mercy. Jacob's sinew shrank, strong as he was in faith, and touched in love, that he might know *His* might with Whom by weeping he prevailed; and he halted all his days. What when it is in displeased love, or loving displeasure! What when the Holy One must hate that which hangs about us, yea, it may be, is wound very close around ourselves, so that He must burn it to the very core, in order to save ourselves. For sin admitted into the soul, although not of the substance of the soul, is almost a part of us; it encompasses us. "The world," saith the Apostle, "*lieth* in wickedness." "They become," saith the Prophet^b, "abominations like that they love." Sin winds around the soul, changes a man's heart into a beast's heart, fills his thoughts, defiles his imagination. "The iron" may well "enter into the soul," which is to save it from such an in-

^b Hosca ix. 10.

mate as this ! The sinner must feel very near the displeasure of God, Who is “a consuming Fire ;” Who, “by a spirit of burning,” consumes the sinner, that He may save the man. Gold and dross are so mixed up in us, that we seem to ourselves all dross. Sin seems so to have penetrated the sinner’s soul, his thoughts, words, acts, the motions of his will, the feelings which come most readily to him, which seem so to come from within, as to be his inmost self, that he can scarcely in thought separate the self which longs to be freed from sin, from the self which is so steeped in sin. The soul which, by God’s pardoning grace and the Blood of Christ, shall be cleansed from all sin, seems now so hopelessly penetrated by the sin which infects and stains it.

And so God’s judgements have ever a twofold aspect, of terror and of love ; the cloud and the bow in it. Yet the darkness is oftentimes so heavy, that the portion of the bow which we see, though very bright is very small. “The thunder and lightning and rain” are upon us ; the hope is for the time to come.

And this befalls us mostly when we have neglected God’s first warnings. In these later years we have had these warnings manifoldly. Internal troubles threatened us ; one large city^c was in flames. God ruled, and still keeps down the elements of destruction, which, if united and kindled, might make our whole land one moral waste. Fearful disease threatened us from afar. When it came very near us, God mitigated its extent, awful as

^c Bristol.

it was wheresoever or whomsoever it struck down, grasping the whole frame, without rest or reprieve or breathing-space, until it collapsed in death. Yet He soon in mercy withdrew it. We breathed again; and some thanked Him. Year after year, again and again during the last ten years, it has been noticed how, when all seemed almost hopelessly lost, God gave us just those skies which we needed; the rain ceased or came at His bidding and our prayers. At one while the seed-time was all gone; and then at the last moment came all those changes of weather, which the husbandman knows to be most needed. Again, the skies were in the morning, as they had been for a long season, as brass; they seemed as fire over our heads; and we thought "when will it ever again rain?" We prayed; on that self-same evening He sent rain on His inheritance. Again, harvests were all but lost through exceeding rain; "the summer was ended, but we were not saved^d." What was all this, but the Arm of God lifted up, yet sparing us, when just about to fall? And what did we? As the Israelites of old. "They sang praise unto Him^e; but within a while they forgot His works, and would not abide His counsels." The plagues of Egypt seemed to come upon our coasts; He slew our fish^f; He sent a murrain upon our cattle; they died by a new and strange disease which we knew not of, nor how to cure it. And then,

^d Jer. viii. 20.

^e Ps. cvi. 12, 13.

^f "How wondrous have been the dealings of the Lord these three years past! In 1845, our cattle suddenly died in numbers, and our coasts were strewed with fish, blackened and dead," &c. (Extract of a letter from Ireland.)

in the last year in one night, the whole crop upon which our brethren in Ireland depended for life, well-nigh perished. We read the like histories in the Prophets : we read of the four sore judgements of God ; the sword, the famine, the noisome beast, and the pestilence : yet the forerunners of some of those judgements have been among us, and we heeded it not. We heeded not the "voices of the Prophets read among us" every Lord's day ; we would not interpret by God's own Word what we saw and felt : people spoke of a "murrain," but the name itself reminded them not Who sent it. Even in the last year, people were employed in seeking out all natural causes of this new disease. Well and right had this been, had we also humbled ourselves and owned from Whose hand it came ; and when, at last, human wisdom was baffled, and knew not whence it was, had, at least, with the magicians of Egypt, owned, "This is the finger of God." We believed not that God was, in earnest, smiting us ; and so we lost the time wherein to turn away His displeasure ; and famine from Him burst in upon us in all its horrors, the more dreadfully because our people was wholly unprepared. A famine, such as, for centuries past, has been known by history alone ! It is likened only to famines half-way back to the birth of our Lord, the middle ages. And now, unless God's mercy turn it aside, "these are but the beginnings of sorrows." Spring is opening upon us, but it brings no gladness to their desolation. Eastertide to the sufferer is one Lent of famine. The bright glad days of summer, it is feared, may but draw forth a pes-

tilence from the hardly-buried corpses. Death is thronging upon death; one form of death is born of another; new diseases, in a few hours, finish what famine has begun; we hear of new names of diseases^s: famine-fever—fever, that is generated by the continual wastings of gnawing and corroding hunger; forms unnaturally emaciated, or unnaturally swollen by disease; “walking spectres;” death seated in the eyes, and bespeaking itself therein, while the sufferer still moves, perhaps unconscious of it; living and dead, side by side, decaying together, where there is none to bury the dead, and, too often, no human help can aid the living; no food to support, scarce water often, to slake the fever of famine. And they who relate these things, tell us that there are other things too horrible to relate. Deaths are now uncounted, counted here and there by fifties or by hundreds^h; but the dead are often buried unheeded, uncoffined, unwept, amid the extremity of misery, by those who loved them most. “There are no widows to make lamentation.” The husband carries his

^s “Famine, typhus fever, dysentery, and a disease hitherto unknown are sweeping away the whole population.” Narrative of a journey from Oxford to Skibbereen, by Lord Dufferin and the Hon. G. F. Boyle. A still more appalling detail is given in “A Journal of a Visit of three days to Skibbereen and its neighbourhood, by Elihu Burritt,” a benevolent American. It has already been stated in “the Guardian,” that Glengariffe suffers as much as Skibbereen. A Clergyman from Ireland mentioned that he knew five places suffering as much as Skibbereen.

^h Mr. Burritt closes his narrative after a most appalling statement: “He (Dr. D.) related other cases too horrible to be published,” and such is the uniform tenor of private letters: they omit details, as, “too harrowing to relate.”

wife's uncoffined remains, the brother his sister, the mother her child, without a tear, to the grave; the inward misery and cry to God, the only prayer over their remains! The prophet's words seem fulfilled, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him;" or again, "I praised the dead that are already dead, more than the living which are yet aliveⁱ."

There are outstanding cases of horror and of grief; but again and again is all this bodily suffering and anguish of soul repeated amid more than three millions of people; again and again it is said, "if things go on thus, within three months a fourth of the people will perish^k." The length of half an island, from sea to sea, is become like a besieged city, or that devoted place, once the city of God, upon whom the wrath of God fell, when it had crucified its Lord. They who witness it say, "it exceeds all, save the siege of Jerusalem." Horrors there are, which one could scarce name, except in the solemnity of Scripture language. The curse on the house of Ahab is fulfilled on members of Christ, "Him that dieth of Ahab in

ⁱ Eccles. iv. 2.

^k "There were at that moment 500 persons dying of want every week in the barony" (Duhallow, Co. Cork).—Statement of a Grand Jurymen: see *Guardian*, March 27. "In the Union Workhouse at Bantry (population 3500) there have, in the last seven weeks, been 400 deaths (more than 1-9th); but this is only a small portion of the mortality. Three coffins are kept in constant requisition about the streets, by the Relief Committee, to convey to the grave those who would otherwise remain uninterred, or receive only a burial revolting to humanity. The visitation under which we are suffering is only now beginning to exhibit itself in its full misery."—Private Letter.

the city shall the dogs eat." More horrible yet is the temptation to sin; for what must be the misery where, for a morsel of food, one man could be found to murder two children! Well-nigh all the sorrows of the Lamentations over the city, "once full of people, that sitteth solitary," are there: "the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst;" the young children, hundreds upon hundreds in one city¹, "ask for bread, and no man breaketh it unto them." "The countenances of a whole population are changed by famine;" "they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered; it is become like a stick;" "they have given their" all "for bread to bring back the soul;" "their children and their sucklings swoon in the streets of the city; their soul is poured out in their mothers' bosom," and they lie as corpses there.

¹ Galway. See extracts in *Guardian*, March 23. "One such proof of our wretchedness by which I have been forcibly struck on every visit to Bantry (Co. Cork), is the sensible diminution in the population. The children, I may say, have been almost swept off, or are confined to their wretched hovels with fever and dysentery. Scarce any are to be seen about the streets."—Extract of a letter from the Clergyman of Glengarriffe. "We supplied with breakfast last week 3133 children (*i. e.* 449 daily, those on the list being 700): the far greater number never taste a morsel in the day but what we can procure for them. If you but heard and saw the dear little sufferers calling upon JESUS, the Father of the poor, to bless their benefactors!"—Extract of another Letter from the Presentation Convent, Galway. Like accounts are given at *Tuam* (Private Letter). In *Doneraile* alone, the Dispensary Physician declared on oath at an inquest, "Two thousand are in want of food and clothing. The people are dying fast from starvation and disease."—Private Letter from the Clergyman of Doneraile and Templeroan. The population of both is more than 10,000.

Such is some portion of the present visitation, multiplied, again and again, in dark cabins, where misery shrouds itself from sight, tombs of the living and the dead. Such, unless God turn scarcity into plenty, is the prospect of five dreary months. And what beyond? God, in His mercy, knoweth! Yet His present gifts of a hopeful season are oftentimes of no avail, since there is neither strength nor hope to till the ground; and a seed-time, neglected in despair, threatens another year of yet sorer famine to come. Pestilence has begun; who, save One, can stay it? Who, save One, shall bid it stay, that it reach not ourselves? All nature seems to shake. The awful disease, which God mitigated to us some years past, has been again, as before wasting the East, and is said to be on its march Westward. Scarcity, although not such as ours, is in different parts of Europe also. The long peace, which God has given us, is, again and again, shaken by rumours of war. God still gives peace; but our own inventions, our pride and boast, lay us open to the desolation of war hereafter, if God permit, as we have not been for centuries. What elements of ruin have we not in our heathenized population at home! Who shall save us, except our God? And how shall He be won to look favourably upon us but by repentance and prayer?

Every visitation of God speaks its own message to the soul. "Thy sin," He says, "shall find thee out." Sorrow and suffering bring to remembrance the sin to which prosperity tempted, and which it forgot. Whatever good deeds^m we have, of these

^m Increased thought for the temporal and spiritual wants of the

late years, by the grace of God, done, more than heretofore, He Who gave us grace to do them will remember the more, the more we forget them; as our evil deeds He will forget if we remember them. To-day is set apart to humble ourselves for our manifold sins and provocations, "the iniquities of this land for which He is pleased to visit usⁿ." I will name but four which this visitation seems especially intended to correct; "covetousness, which is idolatry;" pride, the sin by which Satan fell; and combined in a natural union with it, its opposite, the sin of fallen man, sensual luxury,—whose "god is their belly;" hard-heartedness and neglect of those who minister to our wants.

We cannot, if we will, deny it. Some are the evil brood of the other. Whatever amendments there may have been among us, luxury and self-indulgence have been increasing among us: no class has been contented with the expenditure of their forefathers; new luxuries have invaded us; luxuries have become comforts, and comforts have become necessities and our idols. In its turn, luxury is the parent of covetousness; and covetousness, of unjust gain, and of the grinding of the poor. We *will* not limit our self-indulgence; and so in order to obtain it cheaply, we pare down the wages of our artizans. They who have seen it, know that full often the very clothes we wear are, while they are made, moistened by the tears poor, their education, the building of Churches, extension of the Gospel in our colonies: in all, there has been, in this last half century, a most blessed growth, which God only could have given, and which is a witness that His Holy Spirit is with us.

ⁿ Title of Form of Prayer for the day.

of the poor. How has the same desire of cheapness, to vie with others, impaired the character of our trade, and made practices common which our forefathers would have counted, what they are, dishonesty! Not thoughtful Christians only, but the world itself has termed part of our eagerness for gain a "mania," or madness. Which exhibits the picture of a Christian, the heathen sovereign who burnt the soul-destroying drug with which we were lawlessly tempting his people, and year by year more infecting them^o, or ourselves who warred to protect a deadly but gainful traffic? How again does this eagerness for gainful trade congregate masses, often impenetrable to the Gospel, open to Satan alone! How does it wear out the soul, until it exists only to keep in being the body, itself destitute of its real life, God! What is almost every place, whence our wealth, our strength, our comforts are gathered, what are our ports, our mines, our manufactories, but nurseries of vice, and, as far as in us lies, pitfalls into hell! After all the toils of its present Bishop,^p (alas! so ill responded to by many of its wealthiest,) what is this great town but a mere wilderness for souls to starve and perish? And what, amid all this neglect, if we seek not to amend it, is our religious worship itself, but formality and hypocrisy? For, were it indeed a blessing to men's souls, could they be so careless of the souls of others? Could the rich be content to worship

^o See the fearful account of the increase of the illicit trade in opium, and some of its destructive effects, in Martin's pamphlet.

^p Bp. Blomfield.

God in these solitudes, so rarely, throughout this city of full two millions of souls, gladdened by the presence of those, whose birthright is the kingdom of heaven, whom this world's poverty should, in God's purpose, enrich to life eternal?

And now God would break in pieces these our idols. He has smitten our crops and our herds with disease; and the knowledge of His physical creation, wherein we prided ourselves, can discover neither cause nor remedy, in order that we may at last learn that riches and wisdom come of Him. He has for the time laid low our idol of national prosperity. We are even perplexed how to do aught for the honour of our God. "The meat-offering and drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord." For we know not what to do in the presence of such a scourge from God, such accumulated misery. More blessedly would He teach us to unlearn our luxuries, and learn self-denial; for were it not to insult the Majesty of God to indulge in luxuries, while His people whom He has redeemed, are perishing?

"If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." And are we then indeed members of Christ, if we could give ourselves to feasting, and entertaining one another, while that deep cry of half a nation's misery is ringing in our ears? It is hard to take even Lenten food now, when tens of thousands on tens of thousands are crying for it, for the love of *our* God. Even the beasts of the field cower, and are still, beneath the thunder-cloud. The very sea-birds wail, when one of their fellows is struck dead. Are we, I say not Chris-

tians, but men, if we can “eat, drink, and be merry,” while half a people, our own flesh and bones, are, in intensest suffering, tottering to the grave? Picture to yourselves any fragment of the misery which there takes place, day by day, and hour by hour. Imagine to yourselves your fellow-Christians perishing, like the beasts, on the highways or in ditches; walling themselves up in their poor hovels, that they may, at least, waste away hour by hour, unknown; or death-stricken while they seem to live; a population sensibly diminishing, and the children disappearing from the streets through disease or death; imagine this, which, over half Ireland, from north to south, is multiplied again and again; imagine, if you can, any of the deep moral misery of husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, (it is beyond all imagining,) imagine it, not as if a little way removed, but here in this very city, and bethink you what were fitting in such a visitation as this. What says the prophet, of suffering far less wide than this? “In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.” If we are deaf to the cry of such misery, will it not ascend into the ears of our Father in Heaven, as a witness against us?

We dare not surely, Brethren, as has been done

heretofore, enlist vanities in the ministration to such misery; we dare not mock God, or the sorrows of the perishing, by offering relief gained by frivolities or amusements. Such things, at all times, eat out the very bowels of true charity. But in the sight of death, striking down its thousands, sparing neither young nor old, sweeping away the strong and healthy, and in some forms reaching to such as ourselves^q, whom God has hitherto exempted from suffering, they are more hideous than bodily death. It were like dancing on the graves of the dead. To speak plainly, such things as are heard of, acting plays, visiting theatres, making a purchase of vanities, balls, for the relief of Irish famine, to soothe the intense misery of human beings, now in form often scarce human, wasting and parched away and dried up with famine, and fever, and pestilence, and at times, bereft of reason itself^r through suffering, what were it but a mockery of God and man? Are they not our own bones and our flesh? Could people so do, if they saw one fraction of the misery they would thus minister to? Would not one form of Irish death, like the handwriting on the wall in the midst of Belshazzar's luxury, change such scenes into mourning, at least in horror for themselves? Could persons go forth from luxury and ease to visit Christ's sick, and feed His hungry, and clothe His naked, and gain His reward,

^q "Fever is spreading to every class; and even the rich are becoming involved in the same destruction."—Lord Dufferin's and Mr. Boyle's Narrative.

^r Madness itself has been the consequence of this suffering.

Who at this time Himself was faint and bruised, and His visage marred more than man, Who was stripped upon the Cross for our salvation, and Who left His members to us to receive in them our love for Him Who loved us? Does He, the Maker of Heaven and earth; Who upholds in being Angels by Himself, and the dwellers on this earth by His gifts, Who rained manna on His people to eat, and fed five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes, does He need our gold and silver to feed His dying? Does He, the Giver of all, need His creatures, our perishable gold and silver? or doth He crave the offerings of our hearts, the pure gold of charity, cleansed from earthliness seven times by the fire of His love? Could He not, at a word, without a miracle, (except as far as all His Acts of Providence or of grace are full of miracles, for "marvellous are His works,") could He not unbind the rivers of America and Russia, and send food for His people? Did He, the Rich House-holder, the Father of Mercies, Who sufficeth all, and faileth not, leave His poor in the land, because His own bounty was too small, or His means stinted? Did He not rather promise, even under the Old Testament, as a blessing, that, "the poor should never cease out of the land," that we might in them obtain blessings from Him, and both of us glorify God,—we, by a loving mercy, and they, by a loving thankfulness? What saith Scripture? "Is not this the fast which I have chosen? to deal *thy* bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou

cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" "To deal," *i. e.*, to divide, "*thy* bread," thine own bread, what thou thyself wouldest eat. That, God says, is the fast which He hath chosen, which goes forth in charity; and that is charity in His sight, which has its root in self-denial. It is right, if we can, to suffer with the suffering, to know what hunger is when we would feed the starving, to give liberally thine own bread. But, at least, God would teach us to end these dreadful contrasts (which shock the eyes of men like ourselves) of extreme luxury, scarcely parted by a street, at times scarcely by the thickness of a house, from extreme squalidness. He would now speak to our hearts, that, hearing Him now in this time of awe, the love He gives us now, may live in us, consume in us the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and draw down on us fresh influxes of His love. For what saith God? "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." As, before, morning was turned into the shadow of death, so shall self-denying bountifulness, He says, turn darkness into light; the Light of Him Who is Light, shall dawn upon our hearts, and be shed on all around us, and burst forth in glad hues, the tokens of His love; He shall heal the sickness of thy soul, and thy health shall shoot forth and grow in rich exuberance of His bounty; and "thy righteousness shall go before thee;" righteousness, by Him given, shall marshal thy way through the wilderness of this world before thee, smooth the

hindrances which let thee, level the rough places which make thee stumble, straighten the crooked ways, and lead thee onward on the highway to thy God. Yea, self-denying love shall present herself before thee at the gates of heaven, and these, from which she issued forth unto thee, shall open before her; for she is the offspring of God, (since God is love,) she came forth from the wounded Side of Jesus, she is in us the Gift of His Spirit, "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through His Spirit which He has given us;" and "the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward," protecting thee from Satan, and "gathering^s thee up" safely into the abode of love, and enfolding thee there in the glory and joy and love of thy Lord. For so He says, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat."

I said, "self-denying love;" for of such Holy Scripture speaks, and such is the love of our Lord. Love which is of God must burn up in us the love of self and of perishing things; it must consume the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life; for love and lust cannot dwell together. But, instead of ashes, God through it will give us bread; for short-lived fevers of indulgence, He will give us rest and peace in Him; for this world's pageant, the beauty of the soul through grace; for vanities, Himself, the Light and joy, and sweetness, and bliss, and hope, and rich possession of the soul.

^s The word means to "gather up," either of an individual, or (as the metaphor here may be) of the rear of an army; whence our Version.

As then, in this day of humiliation, we are bound to humble ourselves for our own sins and for the sins of our people,—for they are our own separate sins which have by their blended corruption and offensiveness drawn down this chastisement from Almighty God,—so let us consider well in what way we may amend them. Let us, if we have not before, review our own lives in sorrow before Him, learn what in them is amiss, how we may amend them, what new way of obedience we may strike into, what besetting sin extinguish, what self-indulgences we may part with, that we may gain God. If we have done this, and have received, we hope, the pardon of God, let us mourn again that we ever offended His love Who gave His Son to die in order to win our love, and pray Him to blot out in us all the traces of our sin, and give us back the graces we might have had, had we not so sinned. Thus God says, “I will restore to you the years which the cankerworm hath eaten.” He will restore the decay of the soul, wasted and consumed by sin, and will give us back the graces of which Satan robbed us, and Himself, the Fountain of grace, will enter into our souls, and gladden and beautify them by His Presence. He “will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering,” a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord our God.

Only let us turn with all our hearts, not keeping back part of the price, our own selves, which He has purchased for Himself. “Rend we our hearts,” and so pour out and empty before Him all which we fostered there, (He will not loathe it, though loath-

some,) that so in pure hearts we may receive His pure and Holy Spirit. And “turn we unto the Lord our God;” turn we wholly, so as not to look aside or look back at that which we have left, but set we our faces straight towards Him, looking to catch the light of His grace, looking wholly unto Him to know His will for us, looking to Him with all the earnestness we can for pardon, and light, and strength, and victory over ourselves. He Himself says, “Return unto Me,” not “towards Me” only, but reaching on through perseverance, which is His gift, until, when death is the passage unto life, we by His mercy reach Himself. “Great,” says a writer^t, who knew prophecy only, not the Gospel, “great is penitence which reacheth *quite up* to (it is God’s own word^u) the Throne of Glory.” “So shall ye eat in plenty and be satisfied,” even with the Bread of Angels, Himself our Food, “and praise the Name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously for you; and My people shall never be ashamed,” shall not be ashamed for ever.

If then there be any love of God or man, any desire to love Him who died for us, and those whom in His own stead He gives us to love, any longing to love Him for ever, cherish it in silence and stillness now. What might be allowable at other times would be ghastly now. Cut off what thou needest not, take with the more thankfulness what thou needest, which He in His deep mercy and judgement giveth to thee, and withholdeth it from so many who, we must own, deserve it far more than we. Be this day of solemn humiliation such to our own souls.

^t Kimchi on Hos. xiv. 1, quoted by Pococke.

^u ערי

Each sinner adds to fill up the measure of a nation's sins; each penitent draws down the loving kindness of God, that "He spare His people, and give not His heritage to reproach." For some deep purpose must so grievous a visitation have been sent by the God of mercy. But His visitations are seasons of grace also. Miss we not it for our own souls! So through the Precious Blood-shedding of our All-loving Lord, shall joy spring out of sorrow, abundance out of want, comfort out of desolation, hope out of hopelessness, rest out of trouble, life out of death, from brief afflictions an eternal weight of glory.

An earnest thereof will be to-day's humiliation and to-morrow's mercy. To-day it seemed best that we should study penitence only; and so the solace of penitence, the Offering to our God, the Holy Eucharist, hath been withholden. To-morrow is that pledge of His Infinite love, where-with He, the Maker of all, vouchsafed by His Power and Spirit to overshadow His creature, and, when He "would deliver man, abhorred not the Virgin's Womb." Twice, then, both in the early morning and in the later service, will the pledges of His love be offered. May God so cleanse our souls by penitence to-day, that on the morrow He may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself, and enter in there, sealing our pardon by the Holy Kiss^v of His forgiveness, and saying to our inmost souls: Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged! May He so dwell in our hearts by love,

^v Cant. i. 2, is interpreted of the Holy Eucharist by Fathers. See in S. Cyprian Epistles p. 15. n. 9. Oxf. Tr.

that they may never again wax cold, but dwell in Him and His love for ever, where, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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